week. He has, then, no reason for doing any more work. Work has yielded him all that he requires, and he may lie in the sun and chat lazily, or move about strumming his *pango* (stringed instrument) with that supreme unconsciousness of being an idler, which is to some so irritating, to others so charming, a characteristic of the African.

All this, however, is ideal, and seldom corresponds to the actual fact. The year may have been a bad one; ill-health may have overtaken himself or his family; his cattle may be dying; or he may have failed to find employment after long trekking in search of it, and consequently his tax is unpaid and trouble is hanging over him. But a normal year, neither unusually prosperous nor unusually disastrous, will reveal how the Konde fill in their time. Let it be understood that they see nothing but folly in working for what they do not want. Working for what other people want is a high form of altruism to which only a small number of Konde have risen. That work increases the wealth of the country is a doctrine of high economics which they do not understand: wealth is increased by good harvests and by increase of live-stock.

The whole life of the community centres round the hoeing season. During the great heat which usually precedes the rains, the people move languidly about, incapable of anything like exertion. The men gather in groups and lie idly in the shade, talking languidly, droningly; an illness or a death; a

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461 marriage settlement; the wealth some one has
521 brought from the South; or perhaps they exchange
522 impressions of Europeans they have worked for—a subject into which a great deal of humour can be packed; for it must not be imagined that the white man is taken too seriously. His little foibles, his often none too good temper, his haste to get a job done, and above all his cool assumption of unquestioned superiority, supply endless fun to the village joker. "Bantu as she is spoke" by some Europeans gladdens the weary hours for many a humorously inclined native.

241 Should the rains be late, the situation may be
512 serious, for not only does the heat continue, but the harvest will be correspondingly late, and there is dark fear lest the supplies in the barns, intended to last until March, should have to do until April is well on.
[783] Public prayer is offered, led by the chief. The preliminary ceremonies have been attended to, and as soon as the first rains fall all sally out with the first streak of dawn to begin the year's work. From a score of small crofts one may hear the long happy shout of the men, and the shrill call of the women, as they toil in the early morning; but as the day advances and the heat increases, the shouting dies away, and every one puts the last ounce of energy into the task in hand. Henceforward, for about three months, the native gives all his attention to his crops; for as the season advances, and the grain begins to grow, the weeds come up also in wild profusion, and

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Weller, senior, and turn their children out into the bush to learn whatever the companions they find there have to teach them.

They play at "grown-ups," having their own chiefs and headmen; build houses, pay taxes, learn various useful and many injurious things. Their "chiefs" demand taxes, and there is no pretence about it. A boy must steal, even if it be from his own parents, whatever his chief wants, and pay it to him as tax. More serious thieving is often attempted, and the chief, who is usually the biggest bully of the crowd, will bring to trial and punishment the very boys whom he sent out to steal. Mimic battles are fought in good temper, but they sometimes end in serious injury to some of the warriors. The great achievement which all boys burn to excel in is the high leap, and a thrashing may be the portion of the unlucky one who is weakest. Tricks of many kinds are indulged in, one of the favourites being to send a mere child off on some errand, and on his return direct him to sit in a place where a fire has been kindled, and the ashes removed in his absence; or he is ordered to sit where thorns have been placed for him. No boy dares to disobey such orders.

Mimicry is a favourite amusement. I have seen remarkably good imitations of motor-bicycles made by quite small boys, even the "phut-phut" being reproduced by another boy running along with a bent reed touching the ground. Lanterns are made out of pumpkins, as boys at home make turnip lanterns. Hats and shoes are fashioned out of leaves, and tiny

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671 law-breaking, and the balance was restored when the law was vindicated. The idea that stable equilibrium means stagnation is alien to the Konde mind. To disturb the balance in order to advance to new conditions is a European, not a Bantu idea, and wherever the European stimulus has been removed, the wheels of custom drag heavily again.

692 695 A native court is not, to a white man, an imposing spectacle; though no doubt it is fearsome enough to some trembling rascal, who has little reason to hope that his misdeeds will escape their due reward. The court meets under the village tree, or, if the weather is bad, on the verandah of the chief or judge. There the chief sits with his headmen if the case is an important one, and there are usually a few old men present also, in whose memories are stored up records of previous cases which may have some bearing on the one in hand. The persons concerned are among the audience, which sits facing the court; and when called upon, they rise in turn, and conduct the case from where they stand. The native is a keen disputer. I have known a clever man fight his case with amazing skill and perseverance; even after it was clear that the evidence against him was complete, he would go on adducing fact after fact with a dialectical skill that would not disgrace a European lawyer at cross-examination. If the judge is a man with a [32] sense of humour, he often announces his decision by relating some well-known story, the point of which is taken by all, as, with expressions of approval or otherwise, they rise and go. Execution of sentence

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177 all this progress; but they have made a beginning, and they will go on.

326 Among the purely native arts that of the black-
• 522 smith is held in highest esteem; and the blacksmith himself is a man feared as well as honoured; and joked about as much as he is feared. I think if there were a local "Punch" here, jokes about the blacksmith would take the place of jokes about the plumber which in times past found so frequent favour with the editors of the actual "Punch." He steals both your time and your materials. He tells you that your hoe will be ready on a given day; you get your hoe days afterwards, and he has not used more than half the material you gave him; the rest will go to make another hoe, which he will sell, perhaps to yourself. "As great a thief as a blacksmith," "as big a liar as a blacksmith," are gross insults, not to the blacksmith, but to the man who is compared with him. "The blacksmith gets rich out of other men's property," is another saying indicating the morals of the great
326 artificer. Yet he is feared also, and such jokes are never made in his presence, for he is in touch with mysterious powers, and his ancestor blacksmiths have their own ways of conveying information to him. Quite recently a native friend of mine was talking to his chief, when a messenger came in hot haste to say that a hoe had broken in the blacksmith's hands. The blacksmith had gone at once to consult a diviner, and learned that the spirits were angry because no one was worshipping. "Go at once, therefore, and tell Mwaikuyu (the chief). Do you think heaven is

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the committee, contained no less than eighty-one items. I asked the committee to reduce it by at least a half, but after earnest wrestling with the problem, they returned and said that I must do the reduction myself. By the simple method of drawing my pencil through every second item, I reduced the programme to forty-one, but I did it to the mournful head-shakings of the committee. The performance was a mixture of native songs, games, dances, and Christian hymns, and dragged its weary length far into the afternoon. But there was compensation. Eight or ten boys of about ten years old came on to the platform, and gave a "show" of a European doctor examining people for signs of sleeping sickness, regarding which there was a great scare at the time. The little fellow who acted the doctor was nothing less than an imitative genius, the kick with which he finally dismissed the examinees being done "to the life," and it never failed to raise uproarious laughter in the great audience.

Of purely native games and amusements the number is legion.

Ingongwe is the large purple lump at the end of a growing bunch of bananas. It is rolled on the ground and pursued by yelling boys, armed with pointed sticks, each jabbing at it as it rolls, until one lifts it triumphantly on his stick.

Ikimbenengwa. Two pounding sticks are laid parallel to each other. One boy holds a third across, lifting and lowering it rhythmically, while another tries to hold it down by putting his foot on it. If he

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Then the line advances and passes under the arch singing. The last to pass through is usually held, but sometimes escapes.

Of such games there is almost no end, and new ones are continually being invented, many of them imitative of something introduced by the white man, European peculiarities being specially liable to this hilarious form of flattery. I have seen boys imitate the peculiar walk of Europeans, to the intense joy of the onlookers. For, let it be repeated, to the younger generation the white man is no longer a little tin god, or any other kind of god. He is fully respected for all that the native considers worthy of respect (and their ideas do not always harmonize with ours), but if he is laughable for any reason, he need not doubt that he is laughed at.

Dancing is the principal relaxation of the Konde, if the violent exercise which it sometimes involves may be called relaxation. It is indulged in with great zest, and, as the night advances, with complete abandon, moral and physical. There is not much that can be called religious dancing: a children's rain dance, a pestilence dance, and the wild leaping and shouting, with horn and drum, which young and old engage in at times of eclipse or earthquake. But anything may be made the occasion of an impromptu dance: the arrival of a European, especially if he is popular; the killing of lion or leopard; the killing of much game by a European; the return of friends from a journey; or a score of other reasons, some of them trivial, such as the laying down of a load which

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164. Amusements & Relaxations

538 A hired man eats his own share and that of others. (Be self-reliant.)

The right hand does not cut off the left. (Be consistent.)

There is no blessing in hurry. (Think before you leap.)

If you would get something from under the bed, you must kneel down. (Honour to whom honour is due.)

If you would get honey, you must use fire. (Take the bull by the horns.)

538 Tales told to the children, and to adults, are as numerous as proverbs and riddles, or even more so. ●522 Many of them have come down the generations, but others are of quite recent origin; those which contain references to Europeans being necessarily late compositions, though in a few cases they may be old stories revised to suit modern conditions. At the concert referred to at the beginning of this chapter, one of the items was a hugely comic account of a native's adventures among Europeans, which quite convulsed the audience, though the white man was not always represented as getting the worst of the situation. The reciter, however, modestly disclaimed authorship, and assured me that he had received it from others. In any case the ability to tell a vivid story, and to show the humorous side of life, was quite striking.

538 These stories cover every aspect of life, and each one has a moral, not always obvious to the European listener, but apparently quite clear to the people